

REST PERIODS FOR NURSES

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WHILE in training, our rest hour is one of the most important in the day. As it is regular, what nurse does not look forward to it after a busy morning? It is not necessary that one sleep soundly for an hour or more at this time, but to learn to relax, even if only for a short while, should be and is one of the first things impressed upon a beginner's mind. At first she will say, "I cannot rest for so short a time," or, "I feel worse after lying down than before," but once established it is found a necessity.

A nurse who acquires this habit in the early part of her training is in a better physical condition at the end of her course, than the one who does not listen to the advice and suggestions of her superintendent.

Is rest as necessary for the graduate as the pupil nurse? Most emphatically, yes. As some one has said, "The real work only begins after graduation." Let us follow the graduate in some branches of the profession.

Private nursing: Irregular hours, sleepless nights, confinement, when a patient is too ill to leave with incompetent persons, poor food, oftentimes, fretful members of the family, and so forth. Does she not need a rest after several weeks of such work?

Tubercular nursing: The out-door life, both day and night, connected with the work at a sanatorium is indeed healthful and invigorating, but to be cheerful at all times, not to permit the patients to become depressed and think of themselves (so characteristic of the disease), taxes one's ingenuity to its utmost. Does the tuberculosis nurse need a rest?

District nursing: What nurse employed in this branch does not welcome the rest hour? After tramping through muddy streets, unpaved sidewalks, rain, storm, cold and heat of the day, from house to house, working amidst filth and disease, relieving suffering humanity and bringing order out of chaos, does she need rest?

The nurse in small hospitals experiences peculiar conditions indeed. It is either a "rush" with no rest at all, or nothing to do, when time drags slowly, waiting for patients to come. Of course the only thing to do under these circumstances is to rest when she can.

Think of the patience, tact and judgment required of those nursing

sick children. Most interesting indeed, but after weeks and months of such work a rest must be most welcome.

Institutional work after graduation brings with it again the regular rest hour. Although some days are heavy, very few do not permit a short period of relaxation.

Army nursing and all other positions controlled by the government, really institutional affairs, provide for rest, except, of course, during heavy days.

We must not forget the nurse in settlement work. She, too, needs rest, her days being long and trying.

What is the value of the periods of rest?

The work of a nurse is hard at best but "does not kill" if pursued with the right spirit. The collapse will come, however, sooner or later, as some of us have experienced, if the rest is not taken at the right time. The young graduate, full of ambition and determination to succeed, does not stop to think until too late that after all she is only human and cannot do any more than her sister workers.

After the training-school days are over she should take a long rest before starting on her career. While at work she must use judgment when and at what time to rest. Nothing is more valuable than to get away, at least once a year, from familiar surroundings, leading a different life.

As a real inspiration, I would advise all graduates to join their *alumnæ*, county and state associations, attend meetings, and, if possible, once a year join the conventions of the national organizations, to meet nurses from all parts of the country and world.

"It is only a change," you say, "no rest." Is it not true, that when we think all is out and done with us, nothing is right, there is no use trying to keep up any longer, and is it worth while?—that is the time to get away, not to brood but to meet others less fortunate, and behold, we return refreshed and strengthened, having discovered that after all we are pretty lucky creatures.

The real values then derived from the rest periods are: development of mind and body; steady nerves, tact and good judgment; keeping young (a most important factor, for old nurses are not in demand), and a cheerful happy disposition, all necessary for a successful career.